



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BOOK REVIEWS

Cornwall, I.W., 1958, Soils for the Archaeologist
Phoenix House Ltd., London, 50s net

In addressing his book to the professional archaeologist, Cornwall is in the fortunate position of being an archaeologist sufficiently versed in the techniques of pedology (soil science) to be able to provide a union of the two disciplines. Because of this background, archaeologists not so fortunate as he, who seek the analysis of the soil as a part of their study of the stratigraphy of a site, will find this a most useful book. Although the nature of his subject makes many sections highly technical, the book as a whole is a source to which any archaeologist can turn with some confidence when faced with problems that are normally within the provenance of the soil scientist. Upon consultation, he will quickly gather the types of problems that proper soil analysis can be expected to solve, what questions he must ask and what samples he must take to get results. Those in New Zealand should take special notice of Cornwall's mention of the value of volcanic ash showers as wide spread dating horizons.

In many ways one of the most important sections deals with a series of preliminary tests which nearly any archaeologist with a minimum of equipment is capable of performing. These will not only provide answers to many of his initial questions, but also determine whether further investigation by a professional soil scientist is warranted, and, if so, along what lines it should proceed. Such preliminary work is likely to enable the archaeologist to enlist the services of a soil scientist more readily when he is most needed. The general reader, however, should be warned that while many parts of the book are well within his means, others require a fundamental knowledge of geology and chemistry as well as laboratory equipment not necessarily at his disposal.

Finally, a note might well be appended to Cornwall's discussion of the activity of earthworms. For recent re-investigations on the site of Darwin's original tests have disclosed that after the initial burial and rather rapid sinking of objects in the soil, there is no further movement downward.

Roger Green

Bradford, John, Ancient Landscapes Studies in Field Archaeology
London, G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1957, £4. 4. 0.

For those whose interest is field archaeology, and especially those participating in the site recording scheme recently undertaken by the association, this is a book worthy of attention. In a non-technical language the case for and the importance of aerial photography in field archaeology, particularly for surveys of sizeable areas, is stated in clear terms. At the same time, one could not find better practice in what to look for on aerial photographs and how to interpret his findings than by working his way through its seventy-five fully explained plates.

It has been some twenty-eight years since a major book was devoted to air archaeology and in that time both the subject of aerial photography and its application in archaeology have made great advances. The up-to-date discussion in the first two chapters of the aims, methods and plan of attack of modern aerial archaeology is thus most welcome, and of some concern to field archaeologists everywhere. Using an outstanding series of photographs, Bradford outlines step by step the techniques of air archaeology and the comprehensive nature of its coverage. He lays stress on the fact that technique has a dual purpose, serving not only as a research tool, but also forming a series of permanent records or documents containing considerable evidence, valuable in its own right.

In later chapters these points are illustrated by a number of case examples from the Mediterranean world, previously studied largely from the ground. For all those who follow the prehistory or history of this area, the amount of new information about Neolithic settlements, Etruscan cemeteries, Roman field systems and Classical and Medieval town planning will be of additional interest.

From the viewpoint of some, the book may be considered weak in the coverage of specific methodology, but it must be remembered that such information is available in a number of good books and journal articles on aerial photography. It is rather with the scope and limitations of aerial photography in archaeology that Bradford is concerned, and his remarks in both directions are worthy of note. One can only hope that it will convince some in New Zealand of the great store of information contained on their own aerial photos and stimulate them to intensive work along similar lines.

Unfortunately, as with most books containing a large number of excellent plates, its cost is high. Thus, it may be unwise to

commend its purchase by the average association members. But it would be equally unwise to forgo this opportunity to recommend to all interested in field archaeology that they borrow and read at least the first portion of the book.

Roger Green

Ceram, C.W., A Picture History of Archaeology, Thames and Hudson, 195 , English price 36s.

Wooley, Sir Leonard, History Unearthed, Ernest Benn, 195 , 42s.

Two books of interest to members have recently appeared in New Zealand. The larger and more expensive (approx. 42s.) is well worth purchasing. Entitled "A Picture History of Archaeology" and written by C.W. Ceram of "Gods, Graves and Scholars" fame, its 350 pages are crammed with 310 black-and-white illustrations and 16 full-page colour plates. In most cases each photo has between six lines and three-quarters of a page of good descriptive material about each illustration. Clear, well-printed photos and line drawings, many from manuscripts and books unavailable in New Zealand, cover much of the field of archaeology in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Central America and the book concludes with a section on modern developments.

The illustrative material in "History Unearthed" by Sir Leonard Wooley (approx. 36s.) is poor by comparison with "A Picture History of Archaeology" as most plates are dull and lack clarity. It deals with eighteen archaeological excavations in all parts of the world, which have been selected to show how scientific excavation has led to important discoveries of man's early life. A good introduction of three pages is given to each site and this is followed by three pages of photos. The sites dealt with include: Nimrud, Troy and Mycenae, Maiden Castle, The Fayum and Oxyrhynchus, Anyang, Knossos, Ur, Mohenjo-Daro, Tutankhamun's Tomb, Jericho, Arikamedu and Brahmagiri, Ras Shamra-Ugarit, Serindia I and II, Karatepe, Piedras Negras, The Frozen Tombs of Pazyryk and Sutton Hoo.

The bibliography refers to the main reports published for each site.

R. Brown